

NM Forest & Watershed Health Planning Process

Briefing to the Governor's Blue Ribbon
Committee On Water

EMNRD, Forestry Division

January 28, 2004



The Current State

- NM's ecosystems are in an unhealthy state due to over density of fuels, including invasive species and noxious weeds.
- This unhealthy condition is exacerbated by drought.
- Results include: susceptibility to wildfire and insect infestation, compromised watersheds, and decreasing biodiversity.



The Desired Future

- Healthy Forests resilient to natural fluctuations in environmental condition
- Healthy Watersheds characterized by recharged aquifers, good water quality and optimum stream flow
- Biodiversity that contributes to ecosystem stability and sustains natural conditions
- Thriving communities safe from wildfire



The Need for a NM Forest & Watershed Health Plan

- Only a small percentage of the acreage that needs treating has been treated, and millions of dollars have been spent.
- ***We need to find ways to treat acreage more effectively and efficiently.***



Plan Assumptions

- Treatments are effective when they are responsive to ecological conditions. Therefore, treatments should be based on a landscape scale in keeping with how the environment functions.
- We also need to work more efficiently. This will happen through collaborative efforts that reduce redundancy, share resources, standardize data and processes for better decision-making, and leverage impacts.



Goals

The Forest and Watershed Health Plan will set the framework for statewide, consolidated strategic decision-making that:

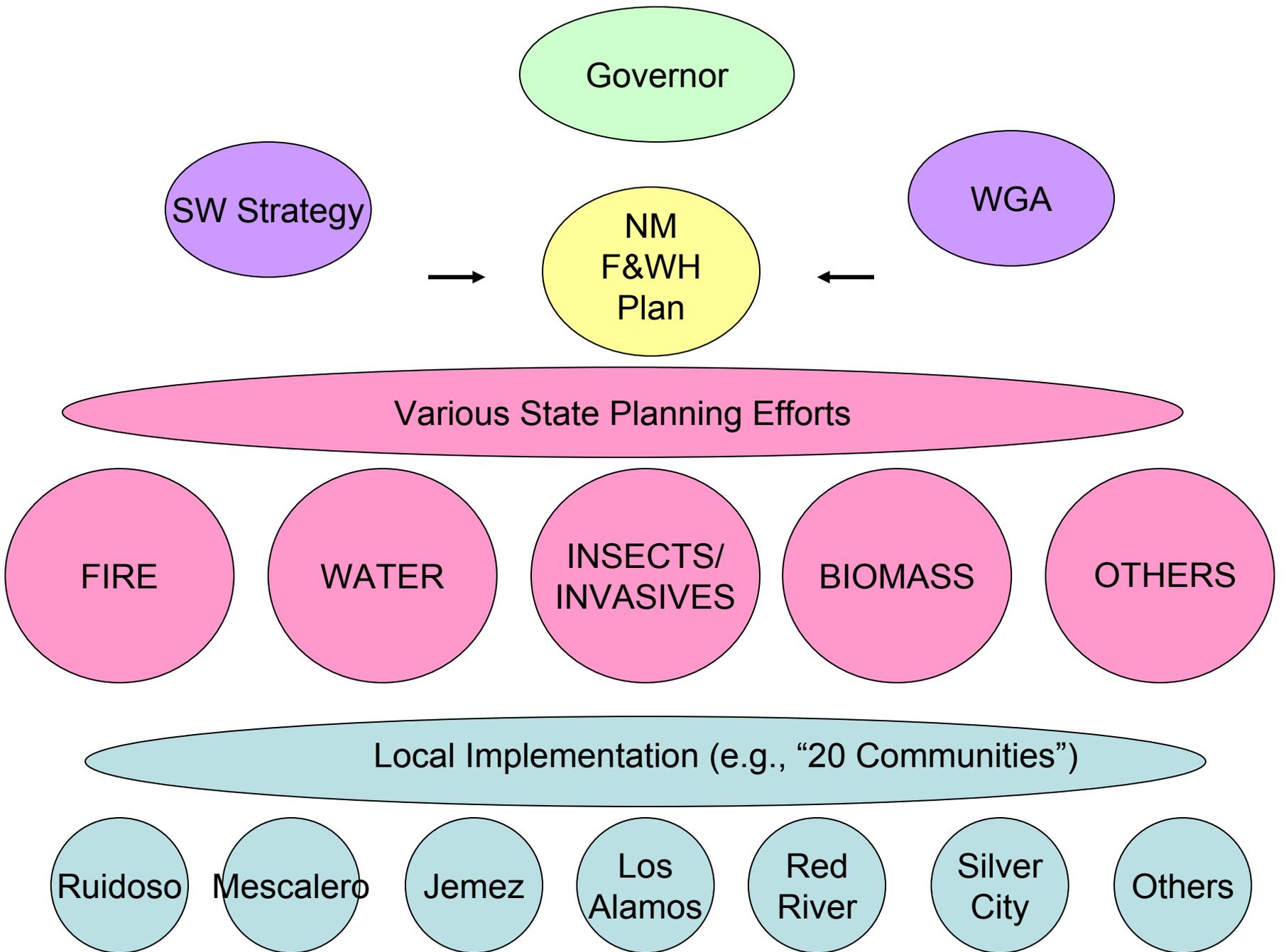
- Promotes planning, management and treatment on a landscape scale
- Fosters optimum collaboration at all levels across landownership jurisdictions



Forest & Watershed Health Plan

- The F&WH Plan will be iterative, dynamic, and adaptive
- Plan accomplishments for the 1st Year:
 - Convene the many stakeholders involved in these issues: build relationships, learn from each other, and find common ground
 - Identify strategic barriers, needs, and opportunities associated with the variety of efforts underway in the state
 - Make strategic recommendations to the Governor that support and enhance these NM efforts





Planning Committee



Three sub-groups of the Planning Committee:

- Executive Team
 - Oversight, Final Approval of Plan
- Members-at-Large
 - Plan Component Development and Plan Draft Review
- Support Team
 - Advise the Project Manager, Oversight of Planning Process, Pre-review of Plan Drafts

Guiding Principles

- The Plan will focus on the underlying problem, not the symptoms, and take the long view (10+ yrs)
- We will plan statewide, but act at the local level
- We will act as aggressively as possible in an ecologically and science based context
- We will make the Plan adaptive to trial and error by monitoring results and revising accordingly
- The Plan will foster collaboration among all ownerships & stakeholder interests
- The Plan will respect social and cultural values and traditions
- Economic vitality will be considered



Some Definitions

The Purpose of these is to guide this Plan

- Forest – an ecosystem characterized by a more or less extensive tree cover, often consisting of stands varying in characteristics such as species composition, structure, age class, and associated processes, and commonly include meadows, streams, fish and wildlife. For the purposes of this Plan, “Forest” includes woodlands, shrub land, riparian and other areas containing woody plants.
- Watershed – a region or land area drained by a single stream, river or drainage network



Some Definitions

The Purpose of these is to guide this Plan

- Landscape – a spatial mosaic of several ecosystems, landforms, and plant communities across a defined area irrespective of ownership or other artificial boundaries and repeated in similar form throughout



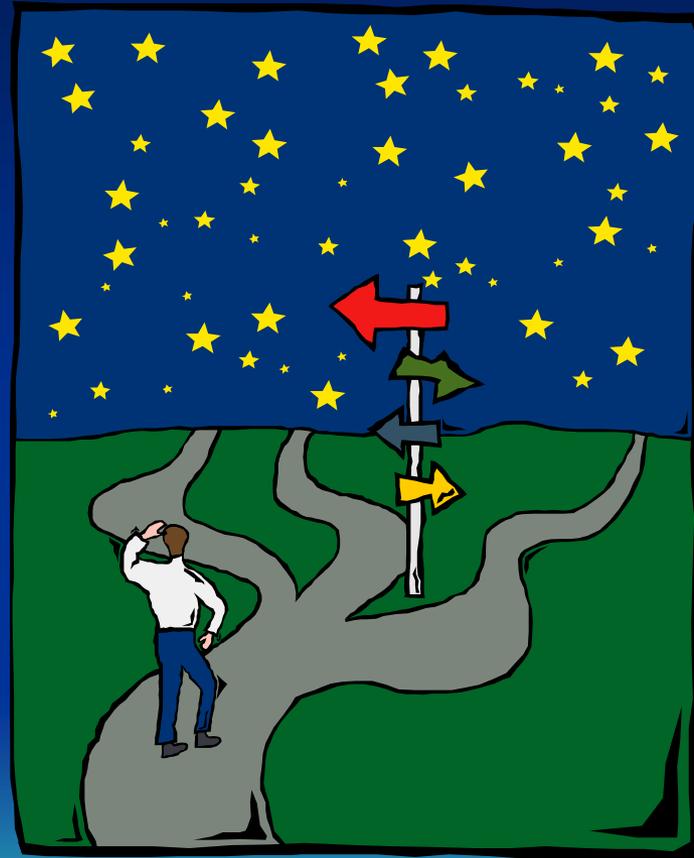
Strategic Recommendations

Statewide, Consolidated Strategic Decision-Making

- The Assessment Results will identify:
 - Barriers to a Landscape Scale Approach
 - Needs to support a Landscape Scale Approach
 - Opportunities to achieve a Landscape Scale Approach
- Based on a review of the Assessment Results, Planning Committee will develop “Top Ten” List of Strategic Recommendations to address them
- These Recommendations will make up the Forest & Watershed Health Plan



The Plan Development Process



Planning Process Overview

- Preparation to Plan
- Planning Committee Meetings
- Town Hall Meetings
- Final Planning Committee Meeting
- Plan Review & Approval



Preparation

-- Summer/Fall 2003 --



- Built the Planning Committee
- Hired Planning Project Manager
- Held Stakeholder Preparatory Meetings
- Held Support Team Meetings
 - Decided on Assessment
 - Hired Assessment Contractor & Convened GIS Workgroup
- Developed website for the Forest & Watershed Health Planning effort (see below)
- Convened Kick-Off Meeting (Dec. 2003)



Planning Committee Meetings

-- Winter/Spring 2004 --

- Four sessions to:
 - Agree upon Goals and Priorities
 - Develop Strategic Recommendations
 - Develop Benchmarks of Achievement
 - Develop Final Product: Draft Outline
- Thursdays, from 8 a.m. to Noon
 - Feb. 26, March 18, April 8 and 29



Town Hall Meetings

-- Spring/Summer 2004 --

- Present Forest Health & Watershed Plan Outline Draft
- Garner Public Input in 6 Communities
- Record and Review Input
- Revise Outline Accordingly



Final Planning Committee Meeting

-- Fall 2004 --

- Date to be Determined
- Review Revised Plan Outline Draft
- Finalize Plan Outline
- Charge Drafting Team to begin writing the Plan



Plan Review & Approval

-- Fall/Winter 2004 --

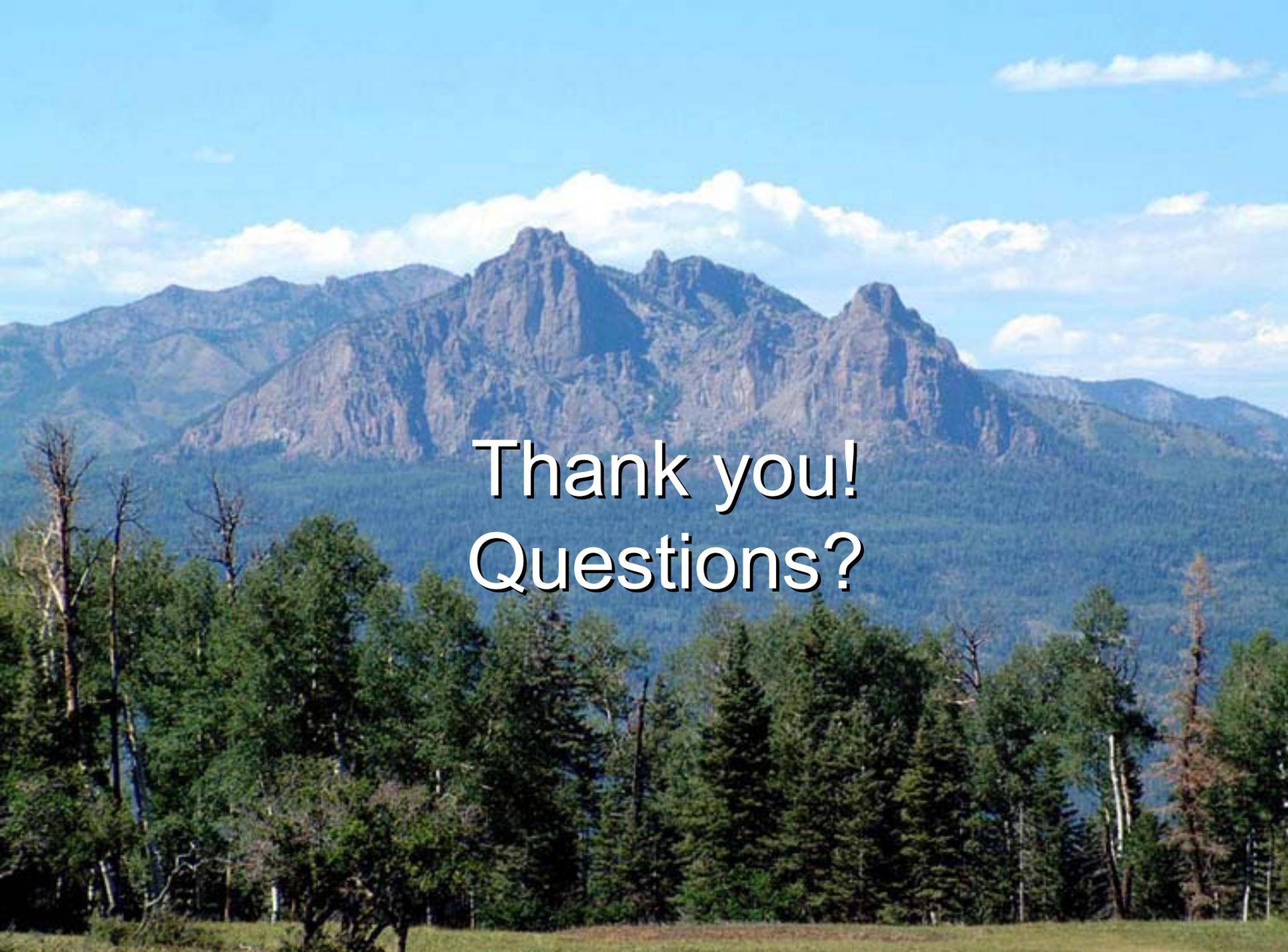
- Planning Committee reviews Forest & Watershed Health Plan Draft and submits written comments (3 week period)
- Support Team reviews comments and finalizes the Forest & Watershed Health Plan
- Executive Team approves the Plan to send to the Governor
- Governor Richardson's review/approval: December 2004



Communication



- The Forest & Watershed Health Planning Process website is maintained by Forestry
- The website includes:
 - Meeting Dates, Agendas, and Reports
 - Drafts of all Plan products as available
 - Planning Committee Names/Affiliations
 - Links to related information (e.g., National Fire Plan, etc.)
- Website address: www.nmforestry.com -- click link for NM Forest & Watershed Health Plan



Thank you!
Questions?